NEWS AND COMMENT IN THE WORLD OF ART

By HENRY McBRIDE.

"Vinnie has a new pussy the color of Branwell Bronte's hair. She thinks it a little 'lower than the angels,' and I concur with her. You remember my ideal cat has always a huge rat in its mouth, just going out of sight—though going out of sight in itself has a peculiar charm."

EMILY DICKINSON, *in a letter to a friend.*

THE remarkable sister to the brother whose hair was the color of Vinnie's cat said once in a moment of despondency, "Life is so constructed that the event does not, cannot match the expectation." Charlotte Bronte was wrong. I have just returned from a morning visit to the Winter Academy, my thoughts are all in a whirl, but I know that Charlotte Bronte was wrong.

The remark is not dated. Possibly she wrote it in her early bitter youth. Certainly she did not write it late in life, for Charlotte Bronte did not live to taste the pleasures of old age. And certainly she could not have written it after she had fallen in love, for though all of her biographers are excessively discreet upon the point it is generally accepted that hers was a love match.

Her genius was so intuitive, however, that it really is remarkable that she ever denied the roundness of human experience, even for a moment. There are depressions of the spirit, as Candide and his friend Cacambo testify to, that extinguish the faculties, and hers must have been under some such temporary eclipse. There are youths, nevertheless, who divine old age's triumphs, for I have met such and talked with them.

I recall one of my experiences of many years ago. I had then the honor of directing a life class in a rather large art school, and as most of the young men composing it were exceedingly competent and quite capable of going for long stretches of time without assistance I frequently read to them from the masters as they worked. The author, upon the occasion I have in mind, was Walt Whitman, and the poem I was reading, I opened upon it at hazard, was "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed."

Before giving them the "Death Carol" I vouchsafed a few dull remarks to the effect that I took the "Death Carol" simply as music, majestic music if you will, but only that. At that period I was so young myself and so full of health that I could not suffer any one, not even Walt Whitman, to mention the word "death" in my presence. However, I read them the imperishable lines:

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death,

Over the treetops I float thee a song!
Over the rising and sinking waves—over the myriad fields, and the prairies wide;
Over the dense packed cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death!

From a shadowed corner of the studio a young fellow broke the silence that followed the reading by saying with an ardent voice and flaming eyes: "I disagree with you" (my pupils were always disagreeing with me, but I never minded it), "I disagree with you. I think it is not only beautiful music but beautiful truth."

I recall glaring at the interrupter coldly, for I thought he was simply trying to be smart, as young men will; but since then, of course, I have seen that he was right. My own talents, whatever they may be, are certainly not intuitive. I had to become old to realize that age has its compensations.

Edward Carpenter, the English philosopher, has lately been telling us how "life at 70" feels. He says:

"People feel kindly toward you—partly because they consider you harmless and not likely to injure them, partly because they are not envious of your condition. They pity you a little in fact—which pleases them and does no harm to you. I find I am a little hard of hearing, and people are good enough— in fact they are compelled—to speak up and speak distinctly. They have the pleasure of helping me over my deafness, and I have the satisfaction of getting them out of their mumbling habits of conversation—a satisfaction so great that were I really not a bit deaf I feel that I should have to pretend to be."

But the passage with which Carpenter closes his autobiography has a quite sublime confutation of Charlotte Bronte's wicked speech, and I trust that all of the young people whose parents or guardians have compelled them to visit the Winter Exhibition of the National Academy of Design will ponder over it deeply:

"The willing sacrifice of life"—he had been speaking of the war—"and the ecstasy of it, would be unintelligible if Death did not indeed mean Transformation."

"In my little individual way I experience something of the same kind. I feel a curious sense of joy in observing—as at my age one is sometimes compelled to do—the natural and inevitable decadence of some portion of the bodily organism, the failures of sight and hearing, the weakening of muscles, the aberrations even of memory—a curious sense of liberation and of obstacles removed. I acknowledge that the experience—the satisfaction and the queer sense of elation—seems utterly unreasonable, and not to be explained by any of the ordinary theories of life; but it is there, and it may, after all, have some meaning."

Reader, you may have been trying to fathom what I have been driving at, but rest assured that I have not been driving at anything at all. These are simply a few thoughts and meditations upon coming out of the Winter Academy. Writers of books and painters of pictures desire to stir your emotions. Behold in what direction mine were stirred. It is in fact a little "review" of the academical occasion; but I flatter myself that this time it will not be quoted in the *American Art News.*

Chase's Art Lecture Memorial Exhibition

A stenographic record was made of the lecture to students given by William M. Chase in the Metropolitan Museum of Art last winter, and the following extracts from it clearly reveal the personality of the speaker:

"There is nothing in the world like work. Fortunately, in our calling there is nothing so entertaining, no workmanship that can compare with the fascination of our calling, and this is especially true if in your student work you are working in a school, and the work you are doing is not a commission and is not meant for an exhibition. What a sense of freedom, a delightful fascination of freedom, to concentrate upon the work which is to fit you for the future! I would say to myself, 'William, see that every day you make a deposit which you can draw upon in the future. It is just as if you made a deposit in a bank. And remember that a failure is a deposit to show you what you cannot afford to do again.'

"Students, upon entering this great building, cut out as best you can any prejudice, any preference, and come into the building with an open, free mind and accept the things as you find them. Keep yourself in as receptive a state of mind as possible, and be like a sponge, ready to absorb all you can. And let me say here, I have been a thief, I have stolen all my life. I have never been so foolish and foolhardy as to refrain from stealing for fear I should be considered as not original.' Originality is found in the greatest composite which you can bring together.

"In coming to the galleries here, select the right kind of companions. The ideal companion will be one who with a touch of the arm in front of a picture will convey his thought. That touch of the arm will suffice. It is better not to say much at all. Large discussion is needless, useless, harmful. The main thing is to get a companion who is in harmony and in sympathy. A successful picture needs no explanation. I could not have said it better if I had thought for one month on that sentence. A really fine work needs no explanation.

"I think there is no place where you hear such extraordinary and highly amusing things said as in a picture gallery. The harshest criticism—the very harshest—is when you hear it said, 'What a lot of time it took him to do that.' The successful work is not of that kind—it looks as if it had been blown upon the canvas, and entirely without effort.

"One always remains a student; and every new canvas I have had was the rarest opportunity to make that the best I have ever done. I have just made a portrait of myself standing with a blank canvas in front of me. This is to be my masterpiece. The ideal and the aim of it all, I believe, is that you can remain young all the time to the end; always be a fresh fighter, ambitious to the end. If it ever becomes tiresome to me to paint, I will do something else.

"You who are studying art have the most dignified profession in the world. Your opportunity to leave a record is wonderful and rare, and I plead with you to see to it that you leave a record of having been on this earth. What the people and the public and the world demand of you is that you will put yourself upon that canvas. What we really want to know is the personality of the painter, not the paint on the canvas."

A memorial loan exhibition of the works of William M. Chase will be held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art during the latter part of the winter.

At a meeting of the trustees, held on November 20, the president appointed the following committee on arrangements: Charles W. Gould, chairman; Herbert Adams, Carroll Beckwith, Bryson Burroughs, Kenyon Cox, Frederick Dielman, Thomas W. Dewing, Daniel C. French, Francis C. Jones, Will H. Low, Frederick W. MacMonnies, Edward Robinson, John S. Sargent, J. Alden Weir and Irving R. Wiles. This committee will have the full cooperation and assistance of Mrs. Chase, with whose approval the exhibition is being arranged.

The exact date of the opening cannot yet be fixed, but it will probably be early in February, and the exhibition will continue for about a month. A private view will be given to the members of the museum on the day before the public opening.

Such an exhibition will give the New York public and others the privilege of seeing pictures painted by Mr. Chase during different periods of his career, and thus of appreciating his large and varied accomplishment as an artist.

Adolphe Borie's Philadelphian Portraits

Adolphe Borie is a Philadelphian who used to paint portraits in nice brown colors as a Philadelphian should, but lately he has been coming to New York a great deal, and little by little masses of pale blue have crept into his pictures. One of his latest portraits, that of Miss Iris Tree that was (she is now Mrs. Moffat), has a background solidly in pale blue. This of course is not right—for a Philadelphian. I trust none of Mr. Borie's Quaker clientele will hear of it.

The Quakers have only recently begun to permit pictures of any kind, you know, and it will not do for artists to rush them too quickly. Another of the sitters, a Mrs. Edward Rowland, is enveloped in clouds of blue gauze. I do not know Mrs. Rowland, which is possibly arguing myself unknown, but I fear she is a New Yorker. I do not believe she is a Quakeress. Certainly the Queen of Sheba never wore more pale blue gauze. If she be a Quakeress, she surely—but there's no use worrying, she isn't one.

I knew a Quakeress once who got into difficulties with the Meeting for a much less heinous offence than wearing blue gauze. My Quakeress was 60, plump as to figure and severe as to face. A son of hers ran off to sea when quite a lad—even Quaker families have their black sheep—became an engineer upon an ocean liner and died while still young. The young man's mates sent on to the Quaker mother an oil painting of the ship upon which the son had served, and it became to her as the apple of her eye and was installed in the chilly solitude of her drawing room, above the white marble mantelpiece, and flanked on either side by trees of white coral under glass globes.

After a time the deacons of the Meeting, hearing of the unholy joy which the Quakeress took in this oil painting, decided that such worldly tendencies should be nipped in the bud and accordingly two of the deacons were sent to remonstrate with my old friend. They even went so far as to threaten to read her out of Meeting unless she put away the picture. All to no avail. The mother spirit, which when on the defence is much the same in Quakeresses and tigresses, rose to its full strength. The deacons beat an ignominious retreat, and as my friend was what is technically known as "a power for good in the community" and had a strong following, it was eventually decided to allow her to retain possession of her marine treasure.

Since that day, of course, even more Quaker barriers have broken down, but the Quakers are still a long way from such carnal indulgences as blue gauze. Mr. Borie's brown pictures and blue pictures are all to be seen in the Folsom Galleries.

Anthony J. Drexel Cassatt. Portrait by Adolphe Borie. Folsom Galleries.

Miss Iris Tree. Portrait by Adolphe Borie. Folsom Galleries.

Print Exhibition at Public Library

The prints division of the New York Public Library has opened, in the print gallery (room 321) of the main building at Fifth avenue and Forty-second street, the third in its series of exhibitions illustrating "The Making of Prints." The present exhibition, which is to remain on view to the end of May, 1917, is devoted to "The Making of a Wood Engraving."

The usual arrangement has been followed. Blocks and tools are shown as a matter of course, bare blocks, blocks drawn upon or photographed upon, ready for engraving, engraved blocks, transfers, electrotypes. There are also gravers (burins) of various kinds, the pad on which the block rests while it is being engraved, the engraver's magnifying glass and stand, pictures of engravers at work and of hands wielding the gravers, as well as of the wood cutters of olden times cutting with a knife on a section of plank. And in the adjoining room are shown the various tools used by the Japanese in the production of their color prints.

For the proper and full appreciation of any work of art some understanding of its technique is necessary of course, some understanding of the limits and possibilities of the medium. But when a case or two of tools and materials—the mechanics of the art, so to speak—have been duly examined there follows the examination of the products of the art in which the technique was applied, in which the engraver illustrated his respect for the art's limits and his understanding of its possibilities.

As in former exhibitions, the best examples possible have been chosen. The enormous amount of material produced in five centuries in wood engraving made rigid selection more necessary even than usual. It is therefore a summary review of the art from the beginning to the present day that is offered to the visitor, one which nevertheless covers the ground in its essential features.

Wood engraving was ever an art more or less close to the people. The earliest sheets, published separately, the block books in which pictures and text were cut into relief on the same plank of wood, the early books printed from movable type, all form highly important factors in the process of bringing the people out of mediævalism into the spirit which was eventually to result in the modern conditions. From the earliest known wood engraving with a date, the "St. Christopher" of 1423, the important stages in the development of the art are illustrated usually by original examples, in a very few cases by reproductions. There are shown books printed in Germany and Italy in the later years of the fifteenth and the earlier years of the sixteenth century, such as the "Nuremburg Chronicle" of 1493, Breydenbach's "Peregrinateo," the "Hypnerotomachia" of Poliphilo, Turrecremata's "Meditations," &c. These all help illustrate the development that was made in book illustration and the essential fact that the history of wood engraving is practically the history of book illustration, with all the educational influence which that implies. They also illustrate the fact so aptly put by Lippmann in the statement that in Germany the proper function of book illustration was instruction, and in Italy ornament. And finally they emphasize clearly and unmistakably the peculiar adaptability of wood engraving to book illustration, since, like type printing, it represents a relief process, so that pictures and text can be printed at one operation. Just as inevitably does this fact suggest and make clear the essential harmony that exists between book illustration and decoration in line and the lines of the printed type page.

After the earliest cuts came the separate prints, beginning with the early sixteenth century and including work by Duerer, Cranach, Graf, Altdorfer and others. Some French "Books of Hours" also add their note of interest. From these prints produced from the wood blocks cut with a knife along the grain we come to the modern work, dating from Bewick, which was produced by engraving with gravers on wood blocks across the grain. The difference, as the exhibition clearly shows, is that in the one case we have the line cut in relief so as to print black on the white ground and in the other the line incised so as to print white on a black ground. The latter implies work in tone, especially in its latest manifestations.

The development of this new art of wood engraving is shown through the early period of the nineteenth century, when, forgetful of the nature of their medium, the engravers tried to imitate engraving on copper through that period of book illustration in England generally known as the period of the '60s, the Doré period in France, the elaborate reproductions of paintings and other works of art as well as the illustrations of Menzel, Richter and others in Germany, down to that brilliant culmination in the absolute reproduction of tone which was the result of the activity of what is generally known as the "new school" of wood engraving in America. In the latter the matter of tone and tints and gradations is carried to the utmost possibility, even to extremes, in the joy of this new felt power, but the best work of this school—the work produced as the result of more clarified ideas—will stand as most remarkable examples of interpretation through black and white of painters of quite different lands and times.

It has often been deplored that the modern photo-mechanical processes have killed wood engraving. The quite modern examples that it was possible to exhibit in the space available here will show that the art is not dead by any means. It is being practised in a different way, that is by artists seeking to express themselves directly on the block as they would on copper in etching or on the stone in lithography. The possibilities of this medium in serving widely differing personalities, as well as in rendering the various national and racial characteristics back of that, are clearly shown in the wood cuts that have been produced in recent years by various artists engraving their own designs on the block. Strang, Sleigh, Ricketts, Craig, Nicholson and Moore in England, where L. Pissare and Verpilleux are also active; Lepere, Riviere, Vallotton and Colin in France; Orlik, Moll, Laage, Klemm and others in Germany and Austria; and Dow, Helen Hyde, Nordfeldt, Ruzicka, Howard McCormick and Allen Lewis in our land have shown in various ways what can be done in wood engraving while remaining strictly within the limits of the medium.

Much of this modern work is in simple open lines and flat tints, the tints often in color. One naturally contrasts this work on the one hand with the reproductive engraving of the American "new school," already referred to, and on the other with the cuts produced in the early days of the art with some similarity in method, certainly in the use of the black line instead of the white. This recurrence of the older methods in only a few cases takes the archaizing form of the resumption of the old manner. The whole movement of "painter wood engraving" is essentially modern in its expression.

A most significant feature of the exhibition lies in the exceedingly wide variety in national, racial and individual style and tendency and viewpoint which is disclosed. That may possibly prove a bit of a revelation even to art lovers of some experience.

George de Curtis, the California poet, by H. P. Burlin. Montross Galleries.

Various Activities in World of Art

A young Southerner of my acquaintance belongs to a family whose fortunes suffered greatly during the civil war, and he says his mother has no respect whatever for the memory of Gen. Sherman. The famous march to the sea traversed her plantation and she says she did not mind losing her slaves, nor the stealing of all her livestock and provisions by Gen. Sherman's soldiers, but she says she never, never can forgive them for ripping open her best feather bed and wantonly spilling a barrel of sorghum into it.

Recently she came to New York, and her son, who has artistic inclinations, showed her among the other sights of the town the famous equestrian bronze group by Saint Gaudens of Gen. Sherman with the angel going on before.

The lady took one glance at it, and with the utmost scorn remarked: "It's just like him. He makes the woman walk."

Samuel P. Avery has purchased and presented to the Brooklyn Museum the entire collection of the wood engravings of Alfred Prunaire which were on exhibition at the museum during the month of November. The purchase was made from the widow of the artist, Mme. Fanny A. Prunaire.

Alfred Prunaire was one of the best known wood engravers in France and at the time of his death four years ago he was engaged on a commission for the French Government in engraving notable canvases in the collections of the Louvre. His wood cuts are found in many volumes produced in the last forty years. He engraved many of Whistler's paintings for Theodore Duret's life of that famous American artist, and his engravings of the drawings of Daumier are well known. He is represented in the New York Public Library Print Department.

Free industrial art courses for high school graduates are open to deserving pupils in the Washington Irving High School, 40 Irving place, Manhattan, N. Y. The regular industrial art courses in this school require two years of study on the part of undergraduates, but girl students, who have graduated from other high schools and who show marked talent in drawing, may enter the industrial art course of the Washington Irving High School and take all of the required work in a single year. This is possible because no scholastic work is demanded of those who have already secured a high school diploma from some other school.

Post-graduate work is also possible in the Washington Irving High School. This has recently been organized with the help of manufacturers and designers in the trade. It offers a six months course along highly specialized lines, so that each student who has already completed the regular industrial course may specialize in the technique of some specific trade, as lace designing, wall paper designing, &c. All of the pupils who have completed this post-graduate course have promptly found openings waiting them in trade studios.

The Washington Irving High School is organized with two terms a year, so that pupils may enter in September or February 1. As a limited number only can be accepted in the art courses, applications on the part of prospective candidates should be made early in January.

The Daniel Gallery has arranged an exhibition of small paintings by many of the artists of the new school. Most of the pictures are lively in color and freely designed. A decorative work by Manigault graces the vestibule, a harbor scene, with masts of tall ships striking up across the architectural setting. Nearby is a "High Bridge" by Lawson, in varying sparkling tones of emerald; a cool, suave river with blocks of ice, by Rockwell Kent; landscapes by Fisk and John Marin, still lifes by Samuel Halpert, street urchins by Jerome Myers, Spanish landscapes by Kuehne and brilliant productions by Walkowitz, Mager, Lever and Zorach.

Henry Symons & Co. are showing in their galleries on east Forty-fourth street a Renaissance group in bronze that has unusual qualities. It is a Triton and Nymph, the Nymph seated upon the Triton's back.

Dr. Bode considered the model to be by Riccio, the author of the bronze that was so much admired in the Davanzati collection, but Mr. Govett, the New York expert upon renaissance bronzes, who has been studying it recently, believes it rather the work of Antico. While the forms of the Triton and Nymph are almost purely Greek, he says, the general design is a considerable departure from the antique. On the contrary Riccio's work is generally close to the Greek in design but varies in the modeling. Moreover the general character of the finish of the bronze leads Mr. Govett to think it the work of Antico, and he regards both the modeling and the patina as of the highest quality.

"Triton and Nymph," Renaissance bronze, on exhibition at Henry Symons & Co.

Another interesting exhibit in the Symons Galleries is a chess set, the pieces being in red and white ivory. It dates from the time of Napoleon; portraits of Napoleon and his Queen, being in the set. Doubtless the bishops are portrayed in notable clericals, and the pawns are effigies of soldiers of the period.

Many specimens of the new glazes being introduced by the Rookwood Potteries are on view in the galleries of Goupil & Co. These are in rich heavy single color glazes flowing over soft porcelain, in the style familiar to collectors of Chinese wares. Sometimes a subtle low relief has been introduced beneath the glaze, or sometimes a dark border design has been painted flatly upon the clay body. There is no effort at the elaborate decoration that was so frequent in the early Rookwood pieces.

The shapes and colors have been carefully studied to give the vases and bowls interest both as works of art in themselves and as appropriate and harmonious receptacles for flowers. The color combinations are usually cream and rose, blue and turquoise or gray and turquoise.

In the second Goupil gallery some color prints by Charles W. Bartlett, an Englishman, are being shown. Mr. Bartlett has worked from wood blocks quite in the old Japanese manner and his effects in many instances are surprisingly Japanese. Two of the impressions in particular might be mistaken by the hasty observer for the work of Hiroshige.

Perhaps the most curious painting which has found its way to America in recent years is "The Obstacle Dance," a large work by Peter Aertsen, one of the founders of the Dutch school, which is now being shown in the Satinover Galleries, along with other old masters.

Most of the works of this artist were destroyed by the "Iconoclasts" in 1566 and only twelve recognized authentic works remain. All of the other eleven are in European museums, so that "The Obstacle Dance" is not only the sole painting by Aertsen in America, but the only one remaining in private hands in the world. Dr. Riemsdijk, director of the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam, sought to purchase the picture in 1908, sending a special delegate to Marseilles for that purpose, but it had already been sold.

"The Obstacle Dance" is a large paintings and is one of only four large works known, the others being the "Bauernfest" in the Wien Imperial Museum, "Egg Dancing" in the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam and "Vegetable and Poultry Market Scene" in the Frankfort Museum. The same characters appear in all of these pictures and all have the same eccentricity of subject and pose, which is only comparable to the works of Bosch of the Flemish school.

"The Obstacle Dance" shows the interior of a sixteenth century Dutch rustic home. There are eight merrymakers, showing various effects from the potations they have been consuming. A piper is mounted on a table, and a man and woman with hands joined are dancing amid various objects placed as "obstacles" on the floor. The colors are rich and through the open door is seen a beautiful Dutch landscape. The attitudes and expressions of the characters in the picutre make a vivid impression.